

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (00:00.894)

Hey everyone, welcome to Snowpal Software Development and Architecture Podcast. We have a very special guest with us today. We have Dr. Deva Rangarajan, who is a professor of sales at IESEG School of Management in France. Deva, thank you so much for taking time and thanks for joining.

Deva Rangarajan (00:18.499)

Krish, thank you so much for having me on the podcast and I look forward to having this conversation with you and see actually what you have in mind for our conversation right now.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (00:27.602)

If absolutely, you know, I'm going to call Deva. This is Dr. Rangarajan, but I'm just going to address. Yes.

Deva Rangarajan (00:34.015)

I'm not a doctor, I'm a PhD. So essentially I don't think you want people coming back and taking a look at them if they're not feeling well. So yeah.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (00:42.318)

No worries. So without further ado, I had given that, you know, Deva, you're in the space of sales and just by way of quick background, like I mentioned to you offline before the, before we hit record, the last two months of last year was the very first time we had snowpelt.

put ourselves in the real world when it came to sales. A lot of us had studied sales many, many years ago, but we had never done anything in the real world. So we run into a lot of, you know, what should I say? I don't know what the right way to put that is, is different experiences, things we, some we expected, some not so much. So a lot of these initial questions in this conversation will be around the recent experience we've had. But I want to start with the very basic. The first question I have for you

Deva Rangarajan (01:17.049)

Yeah.

Deva Rangarajan (01:23.363)

Yeah, sure.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (01:28.212)

list of questions which is what is your favorite food and why is it your favorite food

Deva Rangarajan (01:34.043)

Oh, that's a very, very tough question because I think just like we learn in life, my tastes have evolved. So when I was growing up in India, you could have possibly guessed with a name like mine, growing up in India, at that time I was mostly exposed to food from the south of India and from the north of India. And then my life took me to do my, when I went to the US, to Houston, to do my PhD. And essentially suddenly when I was in Houston, I just found out that

There were so many cuisines that I was truly fascinated with. And then I started forming a liking towards the Mexican cuisine, which as later on told was Tex-Mex actually in Houston, not necessarily Mexican. And then after that, I fell in love with Vietnamese food. And then of course,

There were other cuisines that I liked, but Mexican and Vietnamese apart from Indian were some of my favorite ones. And then of course, after I graduated, my life took me to Belgium. So essentially then I started falling in love with Belgian beers, sorry, with Belgian food. Some of them cooked with beers. So that's something that I also fell in love with. And of course, as I get older and as dietary restrictions start coming in from your doctors and as you get older as well,

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (02:50.126)

Hehehe

Deva Rangarajan (02:53.245)

find myself gravitating much more towards the food from the south of India or anything that's more rice based and things like that. So essentially anything that's Chinese or Vietnamese things like that as well. But my favorite would have to be South Indian food as well.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (03:09.11)

Perfect, thank you. I was looking for, you know, like one dish. If you could just throw out the name of one dish that someone should check out.

Deva Rangarajan (03:16.799)

Absolutely. So one of the one of my favorite dishes is a very simple dish that we eat in the south of India called idli. It's actually a kind of a steamed rice cake where you kind of make a batter with rice and black lentils and essentially you let it ferment it for some time and then of course you then steam it and then you have it with a bunch of chutneys which

of course if the person listening to it is looking at chutney from the viewpoint of being mango chutneys and things like that sweet

My preference is towards savory chutneys. So that's one of my all-time favorites. And I can pretty much say that you give it to me day and night, for morning, for breakfast, for lunch, for dinner. That would be my favorite dish.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (04:00.138)

You know what, I have two in the, I'm looking at right now, if you were right here in front of me, I would have literally shared that with you. So thank you so much for, you know, for that, for kicking this off, getting back into the topic of today's conversation. I'm gonna ask some very general questions because the audience is...

Deva Rangarajan (04:09.666)

Yeah.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (04:20.87)

A lot of them are developers or have been developers, but now in the last few weeks, I've had the pleasure of talking to people slightly outside our comfort zones of just engineering per se. So there's more people watching this who may or may not be in the space of development per se. So some basic questions. What is the difference, Deva, between, say, you know, these are words we understand, some of us do, but not exactly specifically.

pre-sales, sales and marketing. They seem like, in my mind, they're like, they're different, but we always, I try to use them interchangeably and I know I'm wrong every time I did that. So just to kick off this conversation at a very fundamental level, how do we understand the differences between these three terminologies?

Deva Rangarajan (05:02.219)

Well, I think the fact is that even my knowledge has evolved over the years and it's evolved over the years because of how technology has shaped.

the way we interact from a pure supplier perspective. So I'm not looking at a developer, I'm looking at a developer as a supplier of services to a customer. Essentially from that perspective, we are all suppliers. Whether you're an individual or you are a set of people, but you are providing your services to somebody on the other side. So from that perspective, my knowledge has evolved to the point where technology has...

enabled your customers to have access to content and suppliers in a way that was never possible when I began my career in sales. That is, customers are not waiting for you to come and tell them exactly what they need. Customers are already looking for information, which then means then that the role of marketing becomes much more important in traditional business to business settings.

where we are talking about coming up with content that gets the interest of your customers and the purpose of the content is either to create awareness or even to make the customers realize that they might have a problem.

or even educate the customers. And that's an area of research that I'm working on. It's educating the customers and then educating them enough to the point where they say, either I need more clarification or I might actually need somebody to help me with more of the technical specifications needed. And most of the time when that happens.

Deva Rangarajan (06:41.999)

depending upon the complexity of what the customer is looking for, you might need a pre-sales team. And it's called a pre-sales team because the customer might have certain questions or you might have things that are typically what we call jargon called RFI, request for information. They say, I have this issue, how are you going to help me solve it? I don't have a clue. Then you might have a pre-sales team coming in and saying, okay, based on your solutions and based on the products that we have or what we need to customize with some kind of a basic platform that we have.

That's where pre-sales comes in and tries to understand. So the purpose of marketing is to create awareness.

is to educate customers. Pre-sales might come in and help the customers kind of formulate something like an MVP, like a minimum viable product or a minimal viable solution. Whatever you want to call it is a jargon used in your industry. And then of course, when we do this, there are lots going to be commercial terms and conditions, right? When we have to start going in negotiating, saying, okay, if you want to do this, how much are you going to pay us? What can be expected from us? What's going to be in terms of contracts? What happens when there is going to be

If things go down, how are you going to try and help us solve these issues? All those kind of things that come, that's typically what sales does. So essentially what you see is that those are usually three things that we see as the key parts. They are connected to the point that you're all talking to the same customer.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (08:00.795)
Right?

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (08:08.618)
Okay, so sorry, go ahead, continue.

Deva Rangarajan (08:08.783)

Second thing, yeah, I just want to say one thing. It does not mean that because there are three distinct things that you need to have three distinct people doing it. It could have one person who's doing this all. You could be one developer, but what they have to understand is they have a different role to play. When they're creating awareness, they're playing the role of a marketer. When they're actually helping the customer formulate the right kind of solution that is going to help them solve the problem, they are being the pre-sales.

And when they're talking about the terms and conditions about what is to be done and how much we need to get paid, how do they get paid, when do they get paid, what should the customer expect, then you put on the hat of a salesperson. So if I were to try and take a look at some of the developer population and if they're independent developers, individual developers, then this is the role of these three functions, but it could be the same person doing everything.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (09:01.47)

Makes sense, right? So in terms of sequence, so tell me if I understood this correctly, building a long-term relationship, you mentioned content creation, reaching out to the larger world, if you will, in layman's terms. Can I say that it starts with marketing, you're trying to establish these long-term relationships. And then after you do that, you mentioned pre-sales and sales, but I wanna make sure I understood the sequence right.

Sales is the team that's prospecting, reaching out and saying, hey, Deva, here's a problem that you might potentially have. And here is a solution that we offer that might solve your problem. Once we do that, would pre-sales come after sales? So would it be like if I had to put them in a list, it'd be marketing, sales, and then pre-sales?

Deva Rangarajan (09:31.554)
Yeah.

Deva Rangarajan (09:36.76)
Yeah.

Deva Rangarajan (09:46.191)

No, it depends, right? For me, in my opinion, it all depends upon the nature of the business that you're in and the complexity of what you're selling, right? Now, you should also understand that you might create awareness through your marketing initiatives and you might do what is called a later on, if you continue to have me, if there's an interest, we can do what is called inbound campaigns or outbound campaigns. So you're gonna do that. And essentially what's gonna happen is that you're gonna create awareness amongst your customers.

And once you get the awareness, it also depends upon how the customer responds to it, right? The customer might respond to it saying, I want these specific things and tell me what you can actually do, at which point in time, before you hand it over to sales, you even have to check for the feasibility of what the customer is asking for. That assumes that the customer is well down the path of kind of having an idea about what they want. And you can directly pass it on because the time of the salesperson is very, very important.

Pre-sales is also a way of saying should my salesperson be spending time in front of these people as well. Now it could very well be that when you do a marketing campaign in your call to action in the marketing campaign.

could mean contact a salesperson at which point in time, it depends upon how your organization is structured. And it could go to the salesperson and the salesperson might then pass it on to pre-sales depending upon whether the needs of the customers are standardized or if there has to be customization there. So I think there is no one size fits all. I think the more you standardize your offerings,

then we can say this is how it's supposed to go. But we all know that in B2B, and we're looking at developers, it's very hard to standardize everything. There has to be a level of customization according to the customers.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (11:32.726)

You know, you said it brilliantly. I was looking, I was hoping for a different answer because here's why. Even though that is not the right answer, I was looking for a different answer because as a developer, I've tried to quantify everything, right? When we, when I started doing sales two months ago, some part of our time was spent in sales.

I was trying to quantify everything we were doing. And then two months later, we realized what he just said. If I'd had this conversation two months ago with you, I would

have done things quite differently, I promise. Because there came a point where we realized, despite all the tools available, despite all the urge to quantify.

It's, you know, when you're writing code, if you're writing in compile languages, the compiler will be happier and happier and you'll know it right away. If you're using interpretive languages, maybe a little bit later, but eventually you will know. And it's very definitive. When it comes to things like sales, there is no, I realized in the last six weeks or so, there is no definitive answer. And what you said makes, I couldn't agree more with you because.

If someone said, okay, it's marketing, sales and pre-sales or marketing, pre-sales and sales, maybe like you mentioned, it doesn't necessarily, there's no one size fits all and probably the best way to put it because depending on the type of product someone is selling, the community they're selling it to, the time that they might be selling that and last but not least, the mood that they catch the person make going to be making those decisions on those purchases, right? If I caught Deva at a time after he had found those two idlis, maybe.

Deva Rangarajan (12:55.957)
Indeed.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (13:00.766)
he is being more inclined to signing the check versus he was scrambling to find that food that he's looking for as a weird example there.

Deva Rangarajan (13:07.035)
Absolutely. It's a weird example, but I kind of understand what you're saying, right? And I think that's the whole point, right? The whole point here is know your customers and do understand that when you get asked a question, the key thing you have to find out is who is asking that question. If the question is coming to you from, let's say for example, from a person who's very technical, the first thing you have to find out is, is this technical person the key decision maker?

who's going to sign the check when it's needed. Or if they're just testing the waters, which is fine, right? Because at the end of the day, what you're going to do is that your approach is going to be different if you're a salesperson or a pre-salesperson. If you're a salesperson, the chances are you're going to take a look at Krish, the developer. And if I don't ask the right kind of questions, I might just say, ah, Krish is not for me because Krish is not the person making a decision.

On the other hand, if I am a pre-sales person, what I'll do is that it does not really matter. If Krish is asking a question, which is very technical, I might actually support Krish, and I'll go so further down the line, but I will invest so much of my time that sometimes I forget there could be other potential paying customers who are not being served.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (14:22.818)
Right.

Deva Rangarajan (14:26.047)

And so that's pretty much why you need to have this kind of a, some kind of a handshake between sales, pre-sales. And again, marketing is a luxury that you find in only bigger organizations. Right. If you're talking a B2B. So essentially your ability to educate, what do I mean by marketing is I'm essentially saying that your FAQs frequently ask questions or, Hey, did you know that even the podcast that you're doing, even though the podcast that you're doing with me.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (14:39.338)
Absolutely.

Deva Rangarajan (14:55.315)

is maybe more about sales, but imagine that you have a podcast about the offerings that you have. It could be Krish recording it and then making it available and you're educating it, right? Then you become the own marketing person. And if you then say that I've run this campaign, I'm going to buy a list of potential prospects or customers and email it to them, guess what? Krish the developer just became Krish the marketer.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (15:22.847)
Absolutely.

Deva Rangarajan (15:23.123)

And when the question comes back and if the question is very technical, Krish becomes the pre-sales. On the other hand, if somebody watches it and gets their boss and their procurement team to contact you, then Krish becomes the salesperson. So essentially, that is what you will have in every...

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (15:40.33)
Wow.

Deva Rangarajan (15:46.491)

Participant who or every person is going to be listening to this podcast needs to be cognizant of as well

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (15:53.838)

So this is very interesting. So what you're saying is, in some cases, the same person wears three different hats, right? I intentionally and very consciously play the role of a marketer, play the role of a pre-sales person, or play the role of a sales person. But your last example tells me that I might actually inadvertently be doing those same things as well. I might not intentionally necessarily being a sales or a pre-sales person, but by virtue of somebody doing a reach out or something that's inbound,

a more technical question, which may have been different from the original podcast itself, right? So I was playing the role of a marketer when I created the podcast, but when the question comes back to you, that's a bit more technical, you would now have become a pre-sales engineer, so to speak. I mean, did I get that right there?

Deva Rangarajan (16:28.187)

Thank you.

Deva Rangarajan (16:37.339)

Thanks.

Absolutely, that's my idea. But you should always understand that the complexity of what you're selling might necessitate more than just one person acting as presales. It could be multiple things. Presales, again, in your case, Krish, and if your audience is predominantly developers, right, I'm assuming that they're independent contractors or consultants. I'm not saying that it's the case all the time, right? But I can imagine situations where presales, for example,

the other day, pre-sales is actually a team consisting of the technical person, of a legal person, of a person who is looking at risk exposure, of a person in finance. So all of these people together coming together and saying that what is the customer asking us? Is it technologically feasible? Is it financially viable? What is the risk exposure that we're facing ourselves into? What should be the pricing approximately? And all of these might have to be configured depending upon how complex it is. And if one person is doing it, fantastic, right?

But of course, that's essentially what is happening. So I think depending upon the audience they will have to gauge How it is being done and if you're interested Krish, I will send you a recent actually a similar kind of not a podcast but a video recording that I

have of One of my ex students who is actually a who's actually a pre-sales consultant as a pre-sales manager at Google

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (17:58.099)
Absolutely.

Deva Rangarajan (18:04.399)
And the topic of that conversation was exactly about how to take a look at pre-sales and how is it different from sales. So for your audience, one of the things if they want to try and take a look at it, they can take a look at also that as well.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (18:16.318)
No, no, that'd be super helpful. I'll include that in the list so folks can check it out. You mentioned developers. I want to say this. For the majority of my career, I've been building software. Essentially building software, developing, architecting, yada, yada.

Deva Rangarajan (18:20.164)
Yeah.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (18:33.058)
A lot of times, most of the time without realizing that you're also kind of playing the roles of a salesperson, but perhaps implicitly so, not explicitly. Recently, when I had a conversation with somebody else, they said it more beautifully than I could have ever done. Everyone in any team actually represents sales. How they represent sales, to what extent they represent sales, and how much of their time is spent in doing explicit sales might vary depending on their roles. But we all do play a role.

something. It doesn't have to be software, whatever it is that you're creating. If you cannot ultimately make that sale, convince somebody that you're adding value, then all of it is a mood point. That was a revelation to me. I'm not sure if it is to everybody else to wear that role of a salesperson.

Deva Rangarajan (19:15.546)
and yeah.

Deva Rangarajan (19:20.044)
Yeah.

Deva Rangarajan (19:24.075)

Yeah, let me answer this question from two points. One is of course the perception that sales is, there's a connotation that sales is bad, right? I remember when my first job that I had before I became an academic.

I went into sales. And I remember distinctly after having done a first degree in mechanical engineering, my dad asking me this question, saying, couldn't you find another job than sales? The interesting thing was he was an engineer like myself, but he'd gone into production and quality control. So in his idea, it was all sales is about making promises to the customers that the rest of the organization cannot keep. But what

If you try and take a look at it, that's one point, which is there's a lot of negative connotation of what sales is, right? Sales is about saying anything to try and get the sale. And that's not what we're talking about, because what we know right now is, and this was

Something that we were saying that that's not sales way before we had social media where customers can go complain about a salesperson And talk about how unethical the salesperson is we're talking even before that It is about saying that you might get a short-term sale But you're pretty much messing out on the rest of the potential future value that the customer can bring right? I'm talking mostly about b2b kind of situation

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (20:27.266)
Alright.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (20:39.244)
Right.

Deva Rangarajan (20:40.939)
Now, how do we define sales? And essentially, for those of you who prefer much more fancy books to read than just listening to me talk, you can take a look at a wonderful book called To Sell is Human by a guy called Daniel Pink. So To Sell is Human by Daniel Pink, where he makes a case for the fact that everybody is in sales, right? But the key is what does sales mean? If you said it, Krish, you said something inadvertently when you said it's about convincing, right? If...

The art of convincing or persuading another person to see your point of view is what I call sales. There might be no monetary transactions there, right? Of course, because sales is a negative connotation, if I were to use the term negotiation, if everything is a negotiation, then of course it's more fancy. Ah, I'm a negotiator, but as if I'm in sales, what am I doing? I'm negotiating, hopefully looking for a win-win situation.

And essentially, for example, I still joke around. I say, my biggest sale to date was convincing my wife to choose me over all the other males that she had access to meet or interact with. Right. But my ability to convince that I was a person, so essentially that's not a sales situation, but it.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (21:44.722)

I'm going to go to bed.

Deva Rangarajan (21:57.867)

I make it sound like it's a cheap sales, it's not the case. What I'm saying is I try to persuade her, I try to tell her that my value proposition was this, and I was the best suited solution for her requirement. And that's essentially that's what it is. When you go in for a promotion, what are you trying to do? You're trying to convince somebody, but you're gonna sell them the idea that you are the best person to get the promotion because you're gonna help the company achieve something.

You're going to do the same thing with your supplier. You're going to be doing, if you're a developer or an entrepreneur, your biggest sale is convincing your first customer, convincing your first supplier, convincing your family member that you're going to give up probably a well-paid job to take this up.

and convince your first employee that he, she or they should quit their job and come and join you just because you have a dream. So all of that is also in my opinion what sales is. It's the art of persuading people.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (23:01.738)

You know, I'm just going to add one more to your brilliant list, which is convincing one's own self, right? Before we start convincing everybody else, part of the challenge has been, because, you know, in this journey of becoming an entrepreneur, you know, it's been a long time coming. I've been doing this for a while, but I wanted to do this a lot before I actually started doing it. You know, it's, you know, I always, you know, they say, right, the best time to do something was yesterday, but now that it's gone, the next best time

as probably right now. I say this because sometimes we are convinced that we wanna do something, but do we add two paths to it as I said, right? One is to convince yourself as well, alongside convincing everybody else. If you're not convinced, it's gonna be extremely hard to convince somebody, but I'm gonna ask a question there. You know what, let me actually ask a question before I go to the next one.

If I convince myself that what I'm trying to sell makes sense, right? You gave some examples, great examples, and then you try to go about making that sale, whatever it takes to make that sale, the art of persuasion. But there, I reckon as a salesperson, sometimes or a lot of times, I don't wanna say all the time, there are plenty of occasions I reckon you would be in situations where

you, me, or me not be convinced about whatever it is that you're actually selling. How does that, I mean, I mean, in the ideal world, you will only sell things that you're convinced about, but is it fair to say that that's not the real world?

Deva Rangarajan (24:20.931)

Yeah.

Deva Rangarajan (24:30.927)

No, it's not the real world. And when that happens, it's a really, really tricky choice. It's like a catch-22, right? Do I make the sale and not be true to myself? Or do I make the sale and make sure that I'm happy and I have a job, right? It's very difficult. And I would always say is that if you firmly do not believe in a product, let's see.

You have to be careful again here, right? It depends upon a couple of things. One is, is it the only single product that you're selling? Or in a range of products, one is not something that you identify. They're two different things, right? Because if it's the only thing that you're selling and you're not convinced about the value it brings to the customer, right? The obvious academic answer is you need to walk away from the sale, right?

Now, the question of course is if you're an entrepreneur.

Are you going to walk away from a sale and take the risk that you will not be able to pay your supplier or your employee? That's a question, right? And the answer to that is, if you take a look at it in the long run, if you sell a product that you're not convinced in, what are the chances that you will be able to not just sell it, but let's face it, in your business, the sale is only the first part of everything. You still then have to go and deploy it. You have to onboard your customer.

you have to ensure that the customer is getting reaping the benefits of what was said. And you also have another layer of convincing the customer, not the person who signed the deal, but the person who actually has to use your product. If I don't believe, if you're the same person, if I don't believe it, I have an issue where I've made a promise to a client.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (26:04.706)

Right.

Deva Rangarajan (26:22.439)

and I'm not going to deliver it, guess what? Your happiness is going to be very, very short. You may end up getting sued. You may end up losing your reputation. So a short term pain is again, something that you might want to bite the pill and chew the bitter pill rather than take that on.

and then have ramifications down the line. Now, if you happen to be working in an organization where your face was a difficult thing, the key is documenting why you think you are not the best possible solution for the customer. And a lot of times is you have to be trying to be objective about saying why you're not the case. Most of the time if your answer is, we are priced too high, that's a very easy answer and easy cop out.

The key is why is the product not correct? Is it because we did not understand the customers, right? Or did the customer not necessarily understand what we're doing for them? There are so many other nuances to it. But if I were to just go back to the main question is if you don't truly believe in what you're selling, it's gonna be very hard for you to be convincing. Chances are that you'll even lose the sale. You'll not even make the sale.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (27:33.834)

Very fair point. And you know, during our conversation so far, and hopefully, you know, my intent is always to do an okay enough job, so the guest actually has an interest in coming back, right? That's my ulterior motive. So this first conversation is generic and quite intentionally so, because I'm not trying to skim the surface, right? So it's not a particular chapter in a sales book. It is trying to understand, okay, what are some of these different jargons, terminologies that all of us have to understand?

Deva Rangarajan (27:53.435)

Sure.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (28:04.868)

than ever before as an engineer, that everybody who is part of an organization, whether it's in a smaller organization, it's a little bit easier, I reckon, than when it's larger companies. But it's important that you understand some of these terminologies. So when you're writing that feature, implementing that functionality, you have some sense to how somebody's actually gonna be consuming that functionality. Because a lot of times, it's lost in translation. Somebody's out there trying to figure out, this is what the customer's problems are. And then by the time you're done,

time it comes to the dev team and you implement it, you're actually building a slightly different solution because you have other issues that you have to deal with. You have a certain architecture and design. I'm talking purely software here but I'm pretty sure this is applicable to every other industry as well and you come up with a solution that made the most sense to you, right? But that was not what was asked by the person who was out there on the field.

Deva Rangarajan (28:47.534)
everywhere.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (28:57.97)

Now, they did their job well that they found out the problems. They're trying to come to you with telling you what the problems were. You did have good intent in building those solutions, but you could only exercise your authority to a certain extent because you had to make do with what is available, times, deadlines, and yada, yada. And now I come back and give you, they were here. You asked me for a \$1,000.

Again, I'm going to go back to a foot example, because just for the folks who are watching this, if you're not a native speaker, when you hear something, you take it in your native tongue, and then you translate that to the language you're having the conversations in. But that's not as simple as well, right, Deva? Because a lot of us, even though our native language is different, we study our medium of instruction happens to be, happen to have been English, for instance.

So if you talk engineering, I wouldn't know how to say computer science in my native tongue, for instance, right? So I'm going to take, and the reason I digress here is just tell people that we're going to take examples of

Deva Rangarajan (29:54.421)
Indeed.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (30:00.666)

I would take examples of food and music because those two things I highly respect and I have no clue about, right? So there is going to be sprinkles of me referencing Rayman and music and food and whatnot. So if I took in my example of sales telling me what to do, me intending truthfully to doing it, but giving you something else, what happens? What do you do as a salesperson? Because you understand the problems on this side and that side. How do you have to react to this?

Deva Rangarajan (30:12.332)

Yeah.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (30:30.52)

and what do you do?

Deva Rangarajan (30:32.892)

Well, it all depends upon the kind of institution that you're working with, right? So if I am an individual person, I can walk away from it, right? I know that it's going to be hard. My spouse or my partner is not going to be happy that you do not necessarily get the business and then you know pay whatever is necessary for doing your part as well. But

If I'm working in an organization, and there are many parts to this as well, right? So the first thing is that you have to ask yourself is why is the product that we have worked so hard to develop not necessarily fulfilling the needs of the customer? You have to go back and be honest in saying, did we even factor in what the customer wanted when we came up with the product in the first place? That's number one.

The second thing I should also say is that maybe we did, but maybe we did not do a good job of asking the customers or making the customer realize that what they had as a specification was not correct. Now that specification and the way the customer told you was could have been misinterpreted by you.

And then when you misinterpret it as a salesperson, you pass it on to people within your organization. So for example, if I were to say, hey, I'm a salesperson of a company that sells CRM, and then I go to a client and the client says, I want an easy to use CRM system. And I take an easy to use CRM system and give it to a developer. A developer is going to take a look at easy to use in terms of their level of skill set.

and develop a product in line with that skill set in mind, forgetting the fact that the person on the other side is not trained or has a different idea of what easy to use is. They're looking at using your technology and putting it into their workplace and work practice, whereas the work practice and what is easy to use for a person who's designing the product is completely different. So essentially, there are so many factors involved here.

Deva Rangarajan (32:39.991)

that it plays a vital role for the salesperson first of all, which customer am I talking to? Is that the right customer, right? Is it the right customer? Am I talking to the right people in the customer's organization? Is the customer able to articulate exactly what it is that they

want? Or if they're not able to articulate, are they able to articulate the problem that they're facing enough for me to come up with some kind of an idea that I can pass on?

If what the customer is requiring is beyond my comprehension, can I get my pre-sales to come with me to help me understand that part, right? All of this is happening, and this is essentially an issue where you need to have the salespeople with the patience and the skillset to be asking these questions, and the customer to have the necessary skillset to be able to correctly tell you what their issues are. It's like going to a doctor.

and the doctor looks at you and does not ask you any questions about your symptoms and just prescribe something Wouldn't that be scary? So essentially what you need is to be asking the right kind of questions but when the doctor asks me the question As a patient, what if I deliberately do not exactly know how to describe my symptoms? Or I deliberately hide the symptoms because i'm afraid of what the doctor is going to prescribe

There are so many factors here that has got as much to do with the salesperson as well as the relationship they have within their company as well as with the customer that I think you'll need to have separate podcasts with me and you raise an interesting point saying that assuming that you do a good enough job that you want to come in, trust me.

If you think you talk a lot, I talk a lot more. So it's essentially, if I get a platform to talk about things that I'm passionate about, it's always going to be easy. So I think from that viewpoint, there are so many things that could happen here that makes the job of a person who is involved in sales. Please note that I'm not saying it's a salesperson. I say a person who's involved in the sales process.

Deva Rangarajan (34:47.899)

That has got to do with asking the right kind of questions making sure that you don't have your own Lenses and your own ways of interpreting it that they say assumption is a mother of all f-ups. So never make assumptions clarify What you're hearing from the customer by the way, this is for sales It's for any kind of situation where you're trying to understand what the other person is saying and you don't misconstrue things right

How do you try and document you still have other challenges to write you still have other challenges by itself You can go in you can perfectly understand the needs of a client and come back and give it to your people and they could mess it up Alright or

you understand the needs, you create the perfect product, but things go wrong in delivery. Things going wrong in delivery could be because your delivery team is not well trained or does not have the necessary tools or your thing can go wrong because the customer has

not been on boarded well because the person who signed the contract is not the same person who's going to be going into the training and onboarding and deploying it in their processes on a day-to-day basis.

And essentially, there are so many moving parts here that mapping this, it becomes the job of a salesperson.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (36:03.798)

I'm gonna ask, you said a number of important things. One word that caught my attention also was patience, right? You mentioned patience in what you said. Here's my question. Does it mean, and again, you also said that you didn't mean sales person, a person who does sales. Let's take these two things. One is patience, and let's take the fact that you don't need to be a sales person, a person who does sales. What I wanna ask is, is there a certain personality

person. You know, not all of us can do, I mean, on paper, sure, we can all do everything, if you put our hearts and souls and everything into it. But you know, there are things that come naturally to us and there are things that come not so naturally. And I want to take a very specific example, at least one that resonates with me, right? And for folks who may or may not know this composer, his name is A.R. Rahman, you can look him up. He's one of the best composers in the world. He hangs on my family tree here, even though

Deva Rangarajan (36:46.967)

Yeah.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (37:03.712)

because we talk about him on a daily basis. The reason I mention that is him as an example is, patients

It's not patience only because you've yet to achieve something. It's patience is required even after you've achieved a lot of things, because you can never find out what somebody wants till you've actually created some things and put them out there. Right. You're going to have to do that, because sometimes Rehman creates this wonderful music and it unfortunately goes nowhere in terms of its reach. And then keeps chugging along to the next one, the next one and the one after.

But it requires a certain personality, right? They were at least the way I see it. So to be in sales, even if I'm not a sales person, to be in the business of sales, am I required to have a certain personality that might fit this best?

Deva Rangarajan (37:57.375)

Well, it's a good question, right? One of the things we talk about is I say is that give me a person with the right attitude You can make them into a salesperson for the longest time. The perception is the persons were very good at Talking a lot are the ones who are going to be successful in sales. That's not true at all It's actually the people who listen the most are curious

If you're not curious, you will never get creative. Do not tell me that A R Rahman, the person that you mentioned, which of course, since we're both from the same part of India, we do know this particular composer. But essentially what we have is we have those kind of people where if you're curious.

And don't tell me that A.R. Rehman was not curious because he needs to be curious in order for him to understand how do different instruments come together for a particular tool. The same thing a salesperson has to be curious to try and see what moving parts needs to come together to fulfill the needs of the customer as well. So I think being curious, being able to ask questions and most importantly, it is about listening, listening and listening. And these three things are

their personality not necessarily their behaviors and this can be trained in everybody.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (39:17.922)

So in other words, we're gonna have to make, I assume if you're actually doing that full time and that's all that you're doing, then maybe there are some, you make certain adjustments to make those things happen. In a larger organization, that's probably most likely the case. But as you mentioned earlier, there are times where the same person would have to wear multiple hats, depending on where you are in your career or the company that you're working for,

It's a startup, a mid-sized company, and so on. So one more time, there is an element of subjectivity here. If Krish became a salesperson for a large organization, what might be expected of me and any changes to the way I think, behave, or express my personalities would be different from me doing sales work for a smaller organization. So again, we're talking high-level topics in this first conversation. So from staffing somebody,

to do a certain job, what should somebody be looking for? If I wanted to sell Snowpals products to say someone out there in the larger world, do I look for certain traits in a salesperson? Maybe in that case, it's not a person doing sales. It is actually a salesperson. What are some things you look for as an employer?

Deva Rangarajan (40:39.731)

For me, it's always about the ability to be able to be curious because you have to be curious to ask the questions Right if i'm curious i'm going to ask the right kind of questions. I need to really be there I should have a person who is truly passionate about helping customers With the realization that when you do that you're helping yourself because we all know that even customers know that a salesperson Is listening to them because they want to get the business. We all know that but

A customer is going to say, if I get what I wanted, I'm pretty happy with the fact that I'm paying you money for it. So you have to be curious. You have to have the right attitude. You have to be listening. I'm not changing. It's pretty much the same thing. And by the way, it's true for salespeople. It's true for developers. If you're not listening, what's going to happen? You're going to misconstrue what the customers want to say.

and you're going to do that. If you're not curious, you're not going to be able to say, wait a minute, is this the only way of working? Are there newer ways of helping solve the customer's problems? You're not going to be looking at opportunities to learn. Every interaction should be an opportunity for you to learn. That for me is why I think salespeople are not born, they are made.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (41:57.11)

So with that, let me ask you then, right? Let's say you're trying to fill a position. You have two people available to you. One of them is very, very extremely passionate about the business, right? So if you're in the business of music, you have somebody who loves music, who...

Deva Rangarajan (42:08.164)

Hmm.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (42:13.15)

who wants to do music for a living, whatever that means. And then you have another person who's actually not particularly passionate about music or that industry, but you know that they actually can sell. They are good at selling. If you could only hire one of those two people, who might you be leaning towards?

Deva Rangarajan (42:15.869)

You did, yeah.

Deva Rangarajan (42:32.207)

Fantastic. Now you are talking to a professor here right because which means that you'll never get a straight answer I think it depends upon what that person or what does what needs to be sold If the product is so well known that it sells by itself You just need a commercial person who might not be curious because all the curiosity is taken off Because of the wonderful way by which you've either built up a reputation in the market

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (42:36.666)

Ha ha ha!

Deva Rangarajan (43:01.887)

your product or your service will speak for itself, that the job of the salesperson is just going and doing order fulfilling, that kind of stuff, or order gathering, right? That's essentially depending upon the nature of the solution or the product that you have to sell. If on the other hand, if every solution is gonna be customized.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (43:22.019)

Right?

Deva Rangarajan (43:22.711)

You need a person who's curious.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (43:25.774)

So in other words, one more time, right? There is this element of subjectivity, right? So I think the major shift in my mind, for folks who are watching this, a lot of us are also in the business of startups, right? So you have teams, you could be about 10 people in the company, maybe more, maybe slightly lesser, but essentially, cool. So we're gonna wrap up. So I'm just gonna summarize this. What we can do is, I'll hold my thought.

Deva Rangarajan (43:31.426)

Yes.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (43:55.786)

for hopefully a subsequent.

Deva Rangarajan (43:56.855)

No, no, finish it up finish it on because for me it's very important. So that subjectivity is always there right because That's the beauty. Can you tell me two customers or alike
Krish?

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (44:08.25)

No, not at all. Right. And then the subjectivity is important because it's also even though we realize they were as engineers, we realize there is that element of subjectivity, there is this urge to always make it less subjective because that's the only way you understand how to process things. And that's sometimes I've realized is not the right way to do it because you cannot quantify things that are not actually quantifiable as much as you want to quantify them truthfully. So

Deva Rangarajan (44:24.255)
Absolutely.

Deva Rangarajan (44:28.199)
Indeed absolutely and that's what I always say. Selling is both a process and an art form. Selling is both a science and an art form. There is a science in terms of saying how should I be prepared for a call, how should I respond to clients, what kind of questions should I ask, what are the things I should do. That's a process to it. That's what engineers can understand. For me that's what

Help me initially you have to bring some kind of structure to your process even though it's not very clearly set Right. Essentially everything that i've said is if I were to tell give this to christian you would listen to what I just said You will actually draw a flow chart If then if then this you'll write your you'll write your algorithms or whatever it is, right? And you can always bring it down to that right? But of course when that happens you still are talking about humans to humans now There could be a situation in the future where you could have bought to bought

And that's something we can talk about later on as well. Whereas where we're going saying if the customer exactly knows what they want, it's a standard product. They can just put it and put it in a chatbot. The chatbot is going to go and look and scrape the internet and things like that and saying these are the four possible suppliers and then work with it as well. Right. And that's essentially that's in the future. But even there. It assumes a particular way by which people work and assigning a kind of a flow chart.

And that's how human beings we try and engineers, not human beings, sorry, engineers, we try to bring process into even the more subjective aspects to bring some semblance of being able to replicate this over multiple times. And if you are a manager who has to do this, you have to have some kind of a process so that you can teach younger people who might not have that process and say, this is what has worked in the past.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (46:21.067)
You know.

Lovely. With that, Deva, I think this is a great first session. I know there's plenty I've learned and I'm quite confident. I'm going to have people hit me up and ask me follow up questions so I can sort of bug you and have you back here. Folks, this is Dr. Deva Rangarajan, who's again a professor of sales at ISEG School of Management in France. Deva, thank you very much for taking time on a Friday evening to chat with me. Much appreciated.

Deva Rangarajan (46:33.011)

Sure, I would love that.

Deva Rangarajan (46:50.763)

Absolutely, Krish, and anybody who asks, begins with a question about my favorite topic, idli, I will give you as much time as you want. And of course, not that it matters to the audience, but Krish and I also went to middle school together as well. So high school actually together as well. So we also have a history there as well. So Krish, thank you for the opportunity and for the people who listened to this. Thank you so much for taking the time to listen to this. And then of course, if...

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (46:58.058)

Thank you.

Deva Rangarajan (47:17.003)

you like it and if Krish wants me I'll be more than glad to take more questions as well. Yeah, good luck.

Krish (saas.snowpal.com) (47:20.19)

Of course I do. Thanks Deva. Bye bye.